

848 On the day he came back the little boy's mother wanted to come over to the warrior's tipi. She hesitated three times and couldn't get herself to go. But she came over at breakfast the next morning and called at the tipi. They invited her into the tipi and told her to sit down next to the boy. The girl told the grandmother that she had come to do dishes and clean up everything. She went over and sat down next to the grandmother.

"The people wondered: they asked her how it happened she was visiting them when she had no connection to them. Then she told her story. When she finished she begged to be allowed to stay in any capacity.

"The old man, the grandfather, said, 'Yes, it is good. It is up to the old woman, my wife.'

"The old woman, the grandmother, said, 'Yes, it is all right; it is up to the old man and my son.'

"Then the brave said, 'She will take care of him. It is good. She may stay here with us.'

"The child was named Covered With Sage; that is how they found him."

INCEST

835 Incest was forbidden. The tabu applied to parent-child (real and classificatory), brother-sister (real and classificatory) and uncle-niece, aunt-nephew relationships. There was no rationalization of the tabu. It was just there. As Bluefoot observes today, "They did not know about the harm in it. They just didn't want the people to make fun of them for marrying a relative."

626 "Making fun of them" and ostracism were the only controls used by the Comanches to reprove incest.

One whole band is damned in name because of their reputed incestuousness. Lots of Maggots on The Penis was this band's regular appellation. An alternative sobriquet was Something Together. It is declared that this band is now extinct because of its incestuousness. (This might vaguely imply a supernatural sanction, but more likely this is a reflection of attitudes derived from the whites.) Comanche attitudes towards incest are revealed in the following case.

835 Case 34. Incest

588 Informant: Talker (Recorded by Jeannette Mirsky)

"There was a family, father, mother, brother and sister. The children grew up. When the daughter was about twenty-five and very pretty, the family seemed to get separated from the rest of the band. They camped by themselves. It made the mother wonder why they had gotten away from the others. 'It is dangerous to live off by oneself; in case of attack there is no one to help us,' she complained.

"But the son said, 'Be quiet. It is not dangerous.'

"One day the son left them to visit the main camp. On his return he brought with him a wife—a wife to do the cooking and work for them. His sister wanted to leave them to go live in the main camp where she could go to dances and have friends and meet the young men. But her brother forbade it. This brother was in love with her all the time even though he was married. In time, even though he had a wife, he had a child by his sister. 835 588

"Before it came, his sister had missed four periods, so her mother became suspicious. She waited until she was alone with her daughter to question her. The latter revealed to her, 'It is none other than your son. He came at night to the tipi and lifted it up. I thought it was someone else, until it was too late.' Then the family isolated itself even more and the sister had a baby boy born out on the prairie.

"When this happened the father said to his wife, 'What does this mean? What is it all about?'

"And the mother said, 'Come with me. Let us get wood.' When they were in the woods alone, she said to him, 'I did not want to get wood, I wanted to talk to you alone. Our son has begotten a child by our daughter!'

"Light dawned on the father. 'Now I understand,' he said. 'Now I can see why he has kept us away from the rest of the camp. When other men of my age could meet of an evening and smoke, I could not go. We had to be isolated so he could indulge in that insane thing.' It crushed him and he became ill.

"The son went everywhere looking for a medicine man to doctor his father. But the father merely said, 'There is no need for you to go looking. No doctor can cure me. You have killed me.'

"After he had died the mother said to her son, 'Now, my son, you have brought all this on us. You have committed unheard-of things. I, who have lived long, have never heard its equal. You have caused your father's death. Now you must take your own sister to yourself as wife. I am going back to my people.' She did not go back to her own family, but lived among friends in the main camp. When people asked her why she had come back alone, she only told them that her husband had died and that she had come back to her people. She was still mourning him, and so his relatives came to join her in her grievous wails.

"Three years passed. The brother and sister and his first wife came back to the main camp. The sister was the favorite wife and the other was the chore wife. His father's folks heard they had come back to the camp, so they went to call on them right away. They came to wail with them for the father's death which had occurred three years before. The child was now three years old. 'Whose child is that?' asked one of the aunts. 'Is it yours?' she questioned the chore wife.

"'No, it is hers,' pointing to the sister.

"'Is he—her brother—married to her?'

"'Yes, he has taken her to wife.'

"'This is unheard of,' the aunt cried. 'It is insane. Since he has taken his sister as wife, I suppose he will take me too. I am not coming to see you any more. You are living so disgracefully, I cannot come any more.' During this whole time the brother and sister said never a word.

835 "They stayed right on in camp. The brother and sister and chore wife lived together and the child grew up. Some people called on them, but even though they
588 lived in the main camp, they were isolated. People like myself, who knew what was right, thought the brother was crazy. Some men would smoke with him and try to tell him evil would come of it.

"Yet they lived through it all without mishaps and died a ripe, old age."

626 Here society was completely disarmed by a thick-skinned individual.
835 The barbs of public and familial disapproval did not penetrate. There were
588 no legal shafts to hurl—the deed was neither tort nor crime—he matched his indifference against society's impotence—and won.

There were other cases. Red Youth married his sister's daughter. Though he was much older than she, they were married and lived together for years. People called it *asakws'at3n*, niece-uncle marriage, in a sneering way.

In another marriage of this sort, Pointing To The Rising Sun married his sister's beautiful daughter, Wide Feet. His sister, Takes Two Scalps refused to call him "son-in-law." She always called him "elder brother": it was as though he were not married to her daughter. People always made it a point, however, to refer to him as her son-in-law. They were not going to let it pass.

In all these cases the male was the incestuous aggressor. Such men were referred to as crazy (*po'sa*). They did not care for the delicacies of convention.

835 There is a mythological tragedy, however, in which the sister was the aggressor. The boy reacted heroically. He is held up as the ideal to Comanche children: his sister is given them as the example of what comes of shamelessness.

This boy was old enough to have his separate tipi. His sister slept in the big tipi with the parents just as was usually done. One night a girl slipped into the tipi of the youth and lay with him. He did not know who it was in the dark. He was curious, so he marked her dress down the back with paint while they were together.

The next day he went over to where the women were playing shinny to look for his mark. His sister had the mark on her dress! The boy was ashamed; but he did not say anything. He just went away and cut a short double-pointed dogwood spear and took it with him to bed that night. Again his sister came and lay with him as before. Just as they pressed themselves together, he shoved the spear between their breasts. It pierced them both. In the morning the parents came to see why the boy did not come out. They found them dead. The mother was so angry with the shameless daughter that she cut and slashed the body of the girl all to pieces.

The Comanches

848 Many forms of social conduct which are considered Abnormal in our own society were not considered criminal by the Comanches. Their attitudes toward illegitimacy, which seems to have been rare, show no vindictiveness, although the feeling prevailed that every child should have a recognized father.

Premarital sex relations were common, but in case a child was born as a result, the father usually married the mother. The father could claim the child at any time.

- 835 Incest, which consisted of sexual relations between two persons within three degrees of relationship, was tabu, but there was no legal control. The few men who were known to have committed incest were called *possa*, "crazy." Beyond this, there was only informal ostracism—and more sneering references. Thus, when Pointing to the Rising Sun married his sister's beautiful daughter, Wide Feet, his own sister refused to address him as *monapo*, "son-in-law," which would have been the respectful and proper thing to do, had it been a proper marriage. The People did not let it pass, however; they made it a point always to refer to him, her elder brother, as her son-in-law.

The Comanches actually had strong feelings against incest—brother-sister avoidance was enjoined on this basis—but they felt no need to impose strong sanctions against it. Most men were too concerned with the maintenance of their personal prestige to mar it with such an act. And perhaps more important is the fact that Comanche supernaturals were in no sense projected images of a rewarding and punishing father. Incest was not a sin against the gods any more than it was a crime. There was no need to punish the offender in order to protect the community from supernatural wrath. The act remained an offense against good taste, nothing more.

- 839 Rape, except upon captives, occurred infrequently and was not part of the general pattern. Sleep-crawling by either boy or girl was legitimate if the recipient did not object to quiet night visits. But before the advent of the white race's demoralizing influence, Comanche women rated high in chastity.

- 674 Theft was so unusual that no provision was made for it in the legal scheme. Consequently, it must fall into the vague class of unapproved, abnormal acts which were outside the scope of the law.
- 577 Generosity was so highly valued that he who had need of something had only to indicate his desire, and he would receive it as a gift.

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855 tion for the parents to make a munificent return gift, preferably with a horse, and for the child to give away the original gifts to less fortunate children. This child wore especially fine clothes, rarely had any work to do, was spoiled by everyone, could order his or her siblings and even parents around at will, was never forced into marriage, and was generally cock o' the walk. Such a child [595] was usually the offspring of the father's favorite wife (a wealthy man nearly always had several wives), so that jealousy usually was present among the other wives too, and they would neglect and annoy the favorite child whenever they thought they could get away with it. However, if the child were a boy, he would fairly soon start going off on war-parties, while a girl, not having her marriage arranged for the convenience of the parents, would probably marry [158] a man of some means and reputation, and move away also. It should be noted that favorite children never became *pu'ku'ci'*,¹¹ according to our informants.

Girls who were not favorites frequently had their marriages arranged for them by their fathers. While the girl was anxious to marry a glamorous warrior, the father preferred a poor but industrious man who would stay around the home and tend his stock for him, perhaps for two or three years or, with the inducement of additional daughters as rewards for good and continued service, almost indefinitely. A captive (especially a Mexican) made the most dependent, and hence reliable, son-in-law of all, though the lowered prestige of the resultant half-Comanche grandchildren was a deterrent to this practice.

Adoption of children was fairly common, especially for boys into families [727] without any; in this case, they might become "favorite children." Proper [554] relationship terms for a son or daughter were applied; rigorous incest regulations did not hold with adopted children, but there was strong disapproval of marriage of adoptive siblings if they had been brought up together for a number of years. Close friends of sons might also be adopted when comparatively mature; marriage with them does not seem to have been so clearly outlawed though no cases are recorded. In connection with the early maturity and independence of boys, it is interesting to note that this type of adoption was considered to be solely a matter to be arranged between the boy and his prospective new family—his parents had no influence in the arrangements. There is some evidence that fairly immediate descendants of adopted children were, if possible, married to bona fide members of the family in order to get them more firmly grafted onto the family tree. While the fact that the child was not a blood relative was never forgotten, it appears that a person adopted into a family became practically as much a member of it as one born within it, and generally ceased using the old terms of relationship toward his original family,

¹¹ *pu'ku'ci'* were adults following institutionalized patterns of "silly" behavior. This behavior readily lends itself to at least superficial interpretation as an escape mechanism for maladjusted people. This term was also applied to "difficult" children, a separated usage, though of course related.

Out of apparent weakness emerged the wildest marauding brigandage. The Comanches whipped and drove the Apaches from the southern Plains. They stalemated the Spanish. They decimated the pueblo of Pecos. They ranged far below the Rio Grande on slave- and booty-taking raids into Old Mexico. They blocked the westward expansion of the Texas frontier for several decades. They became "The Spartans of the Prairies." They were rough, tough, aggressive and militant individualists. They gave trouble to all their enemies and to themselves. And in their way, out of the nothingness of Shoshone legal backgrounds they shaped a crude but effective system of law to cope with the clashes of individual with individual within their ranks.

The basic postulates of the Comanche way of life are simple and few. They express a strong individualism and man-to-man aggressiveness in the following terms:

- Postulate I. The individual is supreme in all things.
- Postulate II. The self of the male is realized in striving for accumulated war honors, horses, and women.
- Postulate III. Women are sexually and economically desirable but are inferior and subordinate to men.
 - Corollary 1. The sex rights of a husband to his wife are limited to himself and his brothers.
- Postulate IV. The strongest social tie is that of brother to brother.
- Postulate V. Sexual relations between kin (incest) constitutes subhuman behavior.
- Postulate VI. War is essential to the prosperity of the tribe and the individual self-expression of the male.
- Postulate VII. The great spirits (Sun and Earth) have powers of "legal" judgment.
- Postulate VIII. Each Comanche ought to cooperate with others and help them in their life's activities.
 - Corollary 1. Altruism and sharing of goods is socially desirable.
 - Corollary 2. The killing of a fellow tribesman is not permissible.
- Postulate IX. Horses, especially favorite horses, have quasi-human personalities.

The simple needs of Comanche society did not impose any great social pressure for governmental controls, and the high value placed upon individual freedom of action also worked to hold government at a minimum. If a Comanche had been invited to subscribe to a political slogan, he would have given his assent to the proposition that "that government is best which governs least." So fully was this precept expressed in a lack of political action that That's It, one of the most acute of our Comanche informants,